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Letter dated 16 August 2006 from the Permanent Representative of the Congo to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to convey the attached assessment of the work of the Security Council during the presidency of the Congo in May 2006 (see annex).

This assessment has been prepared under my own responsibility following consultations with other members of the Council.

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Basile **Ikouebe**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 16 August 2006 from the Permanent Representative of the Congo to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Assessment of the work of the Security Council during the Presidency of the Congo (May 2006)

Introduction

In May 2006, under the presidency of Basile Ikouebe, Permanent Representative of the Congo to the United Nations, the Security Council addressed a wide range of issues on its agenda.

The Council placed special emphasis on African issues, as was particularly apparent during the ministerial meeting of 9 May 2006, chaired by Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Congo, Rodolphe Adada, on the situation in the Sudan following the signing in Abuja on 5 May 2006 of the Darfur Peace Agreement, and during the private meeting held on 31 May 2006, in which members of the Council heard a briefing by Denis Sassou-Nguesso, President of the Congo and President of the African Union, on armed conflicts in Africa.

In May, the Council held 19 official meetings and 22 informal consultations. It adopted six resolutions and five presidential statements. The President also made five statements to the press on behalf of the Security Council. He held one private meeting with the troop-contributing countries.

Africa

Côte d'Ivoire

On 23 May, the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Jean-Marie Guéhenno, briefed the Council on the political and security situation in Côte d'Ivoire. He noted positive developments in the peace process in Côte d'Ivoire, namely, the launching of pre-regrouping operations and public hearings in seven locations with a view to identifying populations.

The Under-Secretary-General also described the difficulties encountered by the parties to the conflict in implementing the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme, but stressed that the talks under way on the subject between the armed forces of Côte d'Ivoire and those of the Forces nouvelles were an encouraging sign. He noted, however, that despite some specific initiatives taken within the framework of the implementation of the peace process, acts of violence and incitement to hatred and violence were continuing.

The members of the Council welcomed the launching of the first pilot operations for the identification of populations and the beginning of discussions between the Ivorian parties. They reiterated, however, their great concern about the delays in implementing the road map for the holding of elections in October 2006.

In a presidential statement dated 24 May (S/PRST/2006/23), the Security Council endorsed the communiqué of 19 May 2006 issued by the International Working Group. In that statement, the Council urged all Ivorian parties to cooperate

with the Prime Minister in order to accelerate the implementation of the road map. The Council also emphasized its determination to impose targeted measures against persons who obstructed the action of the international community or who incited hatred and violence.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

On 24 May, the Council heard a briefing by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, William Lacy Swing, on recent developments in the situation in the country, in particular on the eve of the elections and the forthcoming mission to be carried out by members of the Council. The Special Representative provided exhaustive information on the status of security system reform, implementation of the demobilization, disarmament and reintegration programme in the eastern part of the country, disciplinary matters within the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) and United Nations action.

Following the clashes on 28 May 2006 in the region of Tsupu (Ituri district) in the north-eastern part of the country, between United Nations troops and armed groups, in which one Nepalese peacekeeper died, three peacekeepers were injured and seven others were captured, on 30 May 2006 the Council heard a brief report by the Under-Secretary-General on developments in the situation.

The members of the Council responded with a presidential statement to the press in which they condemned the acts of violence committed by the armed groups and demanded the unconditional release of the seven MONUC soldiers, while holding their captors directly responsible for anything that might happen to them.

Ethiopia and Eritrea

Following a private meeting on 8 May with troop-contributing countries to the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE), the members of the Council heard a short briefing by the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Hédi Annabi, on the latest developments on the ground.

The Assistant Secretary-General noted that the situation in the Temporary Security Zone was stable but remained fragile and that the restrictions imposed by Eritrea on UNMEE continued to impede its freedom of movement.

The members of the Council expressed their concern regarding the lack of cooperation by the parties and the absence of progress on the ground. They reaffirmed their support for the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission, which would be holding a meeting in London on 17 May.

On 15 May, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 1678 (2006), by which it decided to extend by two weeks the mandate of UNMEE, whose action on the ground was at a standstill, prior to taking a decision about a possible change in its mandate in the light of the conclusions reached at the Commission's meeting.

In the resolution, the Council demanded that the parties comply with its previous requests, in particular that Eritrea reverse its decision to ban UNMEE helicopter flights and that Ethiopia accept the decision of the Commission on the demarcation of the border. Further, the Council called on Member States to contribute to the Trust Fund established in support of the demarcation process.

On 22 May, the Council was briefed by the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping on the meeting of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission held in London on 17 May. The Under-Secretary-General stated that the meeting had not yielded the expected results. He referred to a letter from the Chairman of the Commission addressed to the Secretary-General which mentioned the reopening of liaison offices in Addis Ababa and Asmara and the designation of liaison officers responsible for demarcation and for encouraging the parties to cooperate fully with the Commission representatives. The Chairman of the Commission also stated that the next meeting would be held on 15 June 2006 and that the cost of finalizing the demarcation work would be $10 million.

The Under-Secretary-General also stated that, on the ground, troop movements had been observed in Ethiopia and that displaced persons had returned to areas in southern Eritrea.

The members of the Council unanimously expressed their deep concern regarding the lack of progress made at the meeting of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission in London on 17 May.

They also regretted that the two parties had yet to comply with the demands made, in particular the demand that Eritrea reverse its decision to ban UNMEE helicopter flights and that Ethiopia accept the definitive and binding decision of the Commission.

Nonetheless, the Council was pleased with the correspondence received from Ethiopia which seemed to introduce new developments into the negotiations under way in London.

In that regard, the members of the Council advised caution in taking a decision to adjust the mandate and personnel of UNMEE.

On 31 May, after brief consultations, the members of the Council unanimously adopted resolution 1681 (2006), extending the mandate of UNMEE for a period of four months, until 30 September 2006. In the resolution, the Council demanded that the parties fully comply with its previous requests and that they provide UNMEE with the necessary assistance required for the performance of its duties and assist the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission in the expeditious implementation of its decision. The Council also decided to authorize the reconfiguration of the UNMEE military component.

Sierra Leone

On 4 May, the Council heard a briefing by the Executive Representative of the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL), Victor Da Silva, on the political, economic and security situation in Sierra Leone.

The Executive Representative expanded upon the strategy developed by UNIOSIL, the United Nations country team and the Government of Sierra Leone, with a view to peacebuilding in Sierra Leone.

The members of the Council concluded that the Peacebuilding Commission should study the situation in Sierra Leone when the authorities of Sierra Leone so requested. They appealed to the International Contact Group, the Economic Community of West African States, the African Union, the Mano River Union and the international community to continue their assistance to the Government of Sierra

Leone, with a view to settling the numerous remaining problems, in particular economic recovery and good governance.

Somalia

On 10 May, during consultations followed by a public meeting on Somalia, the Council considered the latest report (see S/2006/229) of the Monitoring Group on Somalia, which stated that violations of the arms embargo continued, and adopted resolution 1676 (2006), which requested the Secretary-General to re-establish the Monitoring Group for six months.

The members of the Council unanimously expressed their deep concern over the repeated violation of the arms embargo, the spread of acts of piracy along the Somali coasts and the militarization of certain regions.

The Council took note of the conclusions contained in the report and encouraged the Monitoring Group to continue its work on updating the list of parties which violated the embargo or contributed to its violation.

On 15 May, the Council heard a briefing by Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs Tuliameni Kalomoh on the situation in Somalia, which was marked by violence in Mogadishu among the rival factions, had led to the death of some 140 people and numerous casualties, mostly civilians, and had resulted in the displacement of thousands of people.

He noted that insecurity and instability in Somalia had worsened and mentioned the efforts undertaken in the region to try to find a way to settle the crisis, in particular conversations held between the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Louseni Fall, and the Monitoring Group.

He informed the members of the Council of the conclusions reached at the meeting of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development in Nairobi and referred to the need to achieve a ceasefire without delay in order to put an end to the crisis unfolding in Mogadishu and to avoid its spreading to the rest of the country. The Under-Secretary-General also told the Council about recommendations made by the Secretary-General to resolve the crisis, including supporting all efforts under way to achieve a ceasefire, settling disputes among the Somali authorities, strengthening the security and stability plan and establishing a balance between action to combat terrorism and attempts to achieve stability.

On 16 May, the Council responded with a statement to the press, in which it called on the warring parties, in particular leaders of factions, to observe a ceasefire, return to the path of dialogue and reconciliation and work within the framework of the transitional federal institutions. In the statement, the Council reminded the Member States of their obligation to implement and enforce the arms embargo imposed by the Security Council in its resolution 733 (1992) and expressed its intention urgently to consider how to strengthen the effectiveness of the arms embargo.

Sudan

On 5 May 2006, the Council heard a briefing by the President of the Council for the month of May, Basile Ikouebe, in his capacity as representative of the current Chairman of the African Union, on the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement at Abuja between the Government of the Sudan and the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army. The members of the Council expressed great satisfaction at the signing of the Agreement and urged the other movements, which had not signed, to do so. They also emphasized the need for a joint mission of the African Union and the United Nations to the Sudan to assess the needs of the African Union Mission in the Sudan, in the context of a transition to a United Nations operation.

On 9 May, the Council held a public debate at the ministerial level, chaired by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Francophonie of the Congo, Rodolphe Adada, on the situation in the Sudan in the light of the signing, in Abuja on 5 May, of the Darfur Peace Agreement between the Government of the Sudan and the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army.

During the debate, the Secretary-General and the members of the Council stated that reinforcing the African Union Mission in the Sudan was a priority in order to guarantee the implementation of the key provisions of the Agreement and to provide greater security for the population.

The Council expressed its concern about the deterioration of the humanitarian situation and asked the rebel movements that had not done so to sign the Agreement without delay. The members of the Council also turned their attention to the organization of a pledging conference to support humanitarian assistance and to the need to guarantee an efficient partnership between the United Nations and the African Union.

In a presidential statement (S/PRST/2006/21), the Council welcomed the Agreement reached on 5 May in Abuja and encouraged the Secretary-General to conduct the necessary consultations, in close collaboration with the African Union and the Government of the Sudan, with a view to preparing the transition to a United Nations operation in Darfur that would have strong African participation.

On 16 May, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 1679 (2006), in which it called on the parties to the Darfur Peace Agreement to collaborate in accelerating the transition from the African Union Mission in the Sudan to a United Nations operation. In particular, the Council called for the deployment of a joint African Union and United Nations technical assessment mission within one week of the adoption of the resolution in order to study the deployment of a peacekeeping operation.

In the resolution, the Council asked the Secretary-General to submit to it recommendations on all relevant aspects of the operation's mandate, including force structure, additional force requirements, potential troop-contributing countries and a detailed financial evaluation of future costs.

Pending the transition, the Council asked the African Union to agree with the United Nations on the resources necessary to strengthen the capacity of the African Union Mission in the Sudan to enforce the security arrangements of the Darfur Peace Agreement.

In the resolution, the Council also called upon the signatories to respect their commitments and implement the Agreement without delay and urged those parties that had not signed the Agreement to do so without delay.

Acting under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, the Council expressed its intention to consider taking strong and effective measures, such as a travel ban and assets freeze, against any individual or group that violated or attempted to block the implementation of the Darfur Peace Agreement.

During the 16 May consultations, the Council also heard a briefing by Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Tuliameni Kalomoh, on the situation between the Sudan and Chad.

The Assistant Secretary-General told the Council that the situation between the two States continued to be of serious concern, in particular with regard to the security and protection of displaced persons and refugees living in the camps.

The Council was also informed of the risks of destabilization that the tensions at the border between the two States could cause for the subregion, in particular the Central African Republic, where the situation was already very fragile.

The members of the Council expressed serious concern in that regard and welcomed the initiative of the African Union to deploy a fact-finding mission on the situation.

On 25 May 2006, the Security Council heard a briefing by the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Sir Emyr Jones Parry, and by the Permanent Representative of France, Jean-Marc de La Sablière, in their respective capacities as head of the Security Council mission to the Sudan and Chad, and head of the Security Council mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, on the terms of reference for the missions by members of the Council to the two countries from 2 to 13 June 2006.

Americas

Haiti

On 15 May the Council held consultations in connection with its consideration of the item entitled "The question concerning Haiti", marked by the inauguration of René Préval as President of Haiti.

In a statement by its President (S/PRST/2006/22) adopted after the consultations, the Council congratulated René Préval on his inauguration as President of Haiti and welcomed the timely holding of municipal, local and parliamentary elections to consolidate democratic institutions.

The Council also underlined that many challenges remained to be tackled, including the need to ensure a secure and stable environment in Haiti, strengthen the country's democratic institutions, foster national reconciliation and political dialogue, promote and protect human rights and the rule of law and build governmental capacity. It also emphasized the need to reform and strengthen Haiti's police, judiciary and correctional systems.

The Council called on donors to continue their efforts on behalf of development in Haiti, a key condition for stability in the country.

Asia

Afghanistan

During the consultations of 15 May, under "Other matters", the Council, in a statement to the press, condemned the terrorist attack on a vehicle of the United Nations Children's Fund in the province of Herat in Afghanistan, which had left two people dead and one seriously injured.

The Council expressed its deep concern over the increasingly serious threats targeting the Afghan population, the national security forces, the international forces and humanitarian aid workers.

Iraq

On 24 May 2006, the Security Council held informal consultations on the inauguration on 20 May 2006 of the Government of Iraq. After the consultations, the President of the Council made a statement on behalf of the Council (S/PRST/2006/24) in which he welcomed that event as a milestone in the country's political transition.

The Council stressed the need to work for national reconciliation through dialogue and inclusion. It demanded that all Iraqis renounce violence and participate in the political process peacefully. Recognizing the Iraqi people's expectations of the new Government, the Council urged the Government to work energetically to achieve those ends, and, noting the role of Iraq's neighbours, called on them to examine how they could reinforce their contribution and to conform to the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Timor-Leste

On 5 May, at a public meeting, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Office in Timor-Leste (UNOTIL), Sukehiro Hasegawa, presented the end of mandate report of the Secretary-General on UNOTIL (S/2006/251 and Corr.1).

The Special Representative referred to internal challenges and potential risks in connection with the 2007 elections in support of the proposal of the Secretary-General to create a small integrated United Nations office for monitoring and reporting on the consolidation of peace and democracy as well as for strengthening public institutions and promoting human rights. The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Timor-Leste, José Ramos Horta, recommended, in view of internal tensions and limited national police, a strong United Nations presence to meet the challenges facing the country.

With a view to protecting the achievements of the United Nations in Timor-Leste, the members of the Council, with the exception of one delegation, welcomed the proposal of the Secretary-General to maintain a United Nations presence after the closure of the existing Office.

During the consultations of 12 May, the Council, concerned about the situation in Timor-Leste, decided unanimously, by its resolution 1677 (2006), to extend the mandate of the United Nations Office in Timor-Leste until 20 June 2006.

On 24 May, after the serious incidents in Dili and other regions of Timor-Leste, the President of the Council read a statement to the press on behalf of the Council, urging all parties to end the violence and to participate in the democratic process with due respect for human rights, and to refrain from the use of intimidation. In the statement, the Council welcomed the defence and security forces of the Governments of Portugal, Australia, New Zealand and Malaysia, dispatched at the request of the Government of Timor-Leste to end the violence that had already claimed many victims.

On 25 May, the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations briefed the Council on the persistent violence against people and the destruction of property in Timor-Leste.

Deeply concerned about the deterioration of the situation in Timor-Leste, the Council issued a presidential statement (S/PRST/2006/25) supporting the deployment of defence and security forces by the Governments of Portugal, Australia, New Zealand and Malaysia to urgently assist Timor-Leste in restoring and maintaining security. The Council also welcomed the initiatives of the Secretary-General in sending a special envoy to Timor-Leste in order to facilitate political dialogue.

The Middle East

Lebanon

On 12 May, the Security Council held consultations on the situation in Lebanon in connection with the implementation of resolution 1559 (2004) on the political independence and sovereignty of Lebanon in a context marked by the holding of the Lebanese national dialogue and the briefing held by the Security Council with Prime Minister Fouad Siniora.

On 17 May, in the context of the consultations, the Council adopted resolution 1680 (2006). The Council encouraged the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to respond favourably to the request made by the Government of Lebanon to delineate the border between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, in particular in the area of the Shab'a Farms, and establish diplomatic relations and representation.

The Council urged the Governments of Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic to take measures to prevent the movement of arms for the militias into Lebanese territory, and welcomed the decision of the national dialogue to disarm Palestinian and all other militias.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

On 24 May 2006, the Security Council held a public meeting at which it conducted its monthly review of the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. The members of the Council focused on the conclusions of the meeting of the Quartet, in particular the demands made of the Government of the Palestinian Authority led by Hamas, and the decisions that followed, against the backdrop of acute humanitarian and financial crisis in the occupied Palestinian territories.

The members also made an appeal for restraint and called on the parties not to resort to unilateral measures which could pre-empt final status issues.

Thematic issues

Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts

On 30 May, the Chairmen of three subsidiary bodies, the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999) concerning Al-Qaida and the Taliban and associated individuals and entities, the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1373 (2001) concerning counter-terrorism, and the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004), presented their quarterly activity reports to the Council.

The Council encouraged the Committees to strengthen their dialogue and cooperation and to streamline their working methods. The Council reaffirmed that terrorism in all its forms and manifestations constituted a serious threat to international peace and security.

Non-proliferation

On 3 May, a draft resolution submitted by France and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland on the question of the nuclear programme of the Islamic Republic of Iran was brought to the attention of the Council for an exchange of views.

On 16 May, the Council was informed of the European Union proposal for an incentive package of interlinked measures on nuclear, economic and security cooperation. The proposal offered civilian nuclear cooperation to the Islamic Republic of Iran if it suspended its uranium enrichment activities. The proposal needed the approval of 25 members of the European Union and was to be presented to the Islamic Republic of Iran in the days ahead.

On 31 May, the Council was informed of the decision of the Government of the United States of America to join the initiative taken by the European Union in connection with the package submitted to the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Humanitarian affairs

The Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordination, Jan Egeland, briefed the Council on humanitarian issues in Chad and the Sudan at a public meeting on 19 May, after his visit to the two countries. The Under-Secretary-General noted that the heightened violence among the various factions in Darfur and the growing insecurity in Chad, with the forced recruitment of children, were both factors that exacerbated the situation of civilians, displaced persons, refugees and humanitarian personnel.

The members of the Council welcomed the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement by the main political actors in the Sudan and Darfur.

The members of the Council expressed, however, their serious concern about the deterioration in the humanitarian situation and their wish to see the parties that had not yet signed the Agreement do so. The members unanimously recognized the

need to enhance the capacities of African Union forces and to increase humanitarian aid to the people of Darfur.

Other issues

Review of the mandates of the Security Council

On 17 May, the Council held its first informal consultations on the new ad hoc mechanism for the review of Council mandates, co-chaired by the Permanent Representative of Slovakia to the United Nations, Peter Burian, and the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations, John Bolton.

The Council discussed at length the procedure to follow in carrying out the mandate review process. The process would allow the Council to review all existing mandates, with a view to ensuring their effectiveness in terms of the political objectives pursued by the United Nations related to the maintenance of international peace and security.